

Message Text

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PAGE 01 CAIRO 11465 121709Z

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ACTION NODS-00

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /001 W

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Z 121640Z NOV 75

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC FLASH 7870

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 11465

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DEPARTMENT PASS SECRETARY FROM AMBASSADOR

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP PFOR PLOS EWWT EG IS

SUBJECT: ISRAELI CARGOS THROUGH THE SUEZ

REF: SECTO 19002

1. I CALLED FAHMY ON SECURE PHONE SHORTLY AFTER RECEIPT REFTEL TO CONVEY INFORMATION GIVEN US BY ISRAELIS ABOUT PROPOSED "SEABIRD" AND "OLYMPUS" PASSAGES THROUGH THE CANAL. IN DOING SO, I MADE ALL OF THE POINTS CITED PARA 2 REFTEL AND EXPRESSED STRONG HOPE THAT FAHMY WOULD AGREE TO ALLOW THE PASSAGE OF THESE SHIPS TO TAKE PLACE AS ROUTINE MATTER. I POINTED OUT THAT PRESS WILL SOON LOSE INTEREST IF SUCH PASSAGES BECOME ROUTINE AND THAT ANY PROBLEMS COULD BE DISCUSSED THROUGH JOINT COMMISSION.

2. FAHMY SAID HE SAW LITTLE POINT TO OUR NOTIFYING GOE WHEN "SEABIRD" WILL APPARENTLY BE AT PORT SAID IN A FEW HOURS. SO FAR AS REUTERS REPORTS ARE CONCERNED, HE EXPRESSED VIEW THESE HAVE DELIBERATELY BEEN GIVEN OUT BY ISRAELIS IN AN ATTEMPT TO MAKE MUCH OF THIS ISSUE. IT IS NOT THE NEWS AGENCIES THAT ARE KEEPING THE ISSUE ALIVE, BUT THE ISRAELIS AND WE SEEM
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TO BE UNABLE TO STOP THEM.

3. AS HE HAD TOLD US EARLIER, FAHMY CONTINUED, INSTRUCTIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN GIVEN TO THE SUEZ CANAL AUTHORITIES ON HOW TO HANDLE SHIPS CARRYING ISRAELI CARGOES. THESE INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE FOLLOWED SO LONG AS ISRAELIS DO NOT TRY TO BE "MISCHIEVOUS" BY INCLUDING STRATEGIC CARGO OR ISRAELI CREWMEMBERS OR ISRAELI PROPAGANDA.

4. NOTING HIS IMPRESSION THAT WE ARE SEEKING TO ROUTINIZE SUCH ISRAELI CARGO TRANSITS, FAHMY STRESSED HE WAS NOT RPT NOT TELLING US THAT GOE AGREES TO MAKING THEM ROUTINE AFFAIRS. HE WAS SIMPLY SAYING THAT GOE WILL HANDLE EVERY CASE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS OWN BEST JUDGEMENT. IF ISRAELIS ARE "MISCHIEVOUS", GOE WILL TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTION WITHOUT RPT WITHOUT CONSULTING US. IT WILL DO SO WITHOUT REGARD TO AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION.

5. IN LIGHT OF ABOVE, FAHMY SAID HE DID NOT RPT NOT WANT US ANY LONGER TO NOTIFY GOE WHEN ISRAELI CARGOS ARE TO TRANSIT THE CANAL. GOE WILL HANDLE THEM ALONG LINES HE HAD OUTLINED TO US.

6. COMMENT: FAHMY WAS QUITE CALM AND RATIONAL ABOUT THESE SHIP PASSAGES AND DID NOT RPT NOT SEEK TO BE ARGUMENTATIVE. I THINK THERE IS REASONABLE CHANCE SUCH TRANSITS CAN BECOME ROUTINE IF ISRAELIS HANDLE THEM CAREFULLY. WE MAY WISH TO ADVISE GOI OF ABOVE AND CAUTION IT THAT CONTINUATION OF UNIMPEDED CARGO TRANSITS WILL DEPEND UPON ISRAELIS REMAINING WITHIN GUIDELINES SET BY EGYPTIANS. FAILURE TO DO SO WILL INVITE STOPPAGES.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: POLICIES, SEABIRD, OLYMPUS, CARGO SHIPS, CANALS, SUEZ, DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, CAT-C
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 12 NOV 1975
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1975CAIRO11465
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: P850081-1487
From: CAIRO
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1975/newtext/t19751151/aaaabtrt.tel
Line Count: 97
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NODS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: NODIS
Reference: 77 SECTO 19002, 75 SECTO 19002
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 31 JUL 2003
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <31 JUL 2003 by WorrelSW>; APPROVED <21 NOV 2003 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
06 JUL 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ISRAELI CARGOS THROUGH THE SUEZ
TAGS: PFOR, OVIP, PLOS, EWWT, EG, IS, (FAHMY, ISMAIL)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 06 JUL 2006